827 191 381 776 gain is felt as a contribution to the beneficial nyama. "The spirit Téliko transforms the air emitted by the speaker into favorable nyama; upon hearing a good word, it would be necessary to stop one's ears so that this nyama does not leave the person who received it." Moreover, if a person opens his eyes wide while watching the speaker, "the latter's nyama is able to penetrate the body of the listener" and spread within it as a reviving tide. While this takes place, the good word saturates the air, helping the action of breathing, hence the life, of the listener. "One breathes," says an informant, "with the nyama of the words which enter through the eyes and ears." But this process is not one-sided. The good nyama returns to the speaker through his own eyes while he is looking at the other person. He is reflected in the person with whom he is talking and it is as though he were talking to himself. There is a beneficial exchange even when only one of the two actors speaks.

Inversely, a bad word or an insult upsets the listener and rebounds, acting upon the insulting person. This harmonious arrangement summarizes precisely and powerfully the universal movement, principle of life and strength for all beings. It comprises an individual movement provoked by the word which acts upon the body by developing and regularizing the rhythm of breathing, and a collective movement set off by the return of the word to the speaker. Because of the effect of the spoken word, exchanges are established that are favorable both to the rhythm of individual breathing and to the equilibrium of universal life. This effect is not limited to words in the strict sense; sight enjoys the same prerogatives as hearing and diction. If an object [431] belonging to a certain person is seen and coveted by another, the owner cannot refuse to give it to him. The act of seeing has established by itself, between the stranger and the object, a bond which is affectively stronger than that of ownership.

826 The articulated parts of the human body are just as meaningful as the head. The bones, more lasting than the flesh /69/ and a testimony, in the grave, of the life that has passed, are its foundation and framework.

The navel is the central point of the articulations: that is why Faro, when he drowns a person, returns the body after having slit the nose and navel. This double mutilation shows that he has reclaimed the head and the body of the guilty man. The articulations are the indication of man's condition in the new order. Where he was once

845 Everyone visits the parents' home and takes to them what gifts one can
[431] give for to give to twins is equivalent to giving to Faro.

The name-giving ceremony is carried out on the river bank if the
845 village is situated close to the Niger, or otherwise on the edge of a
553 pond. The children are brought by their parents who, between them,
851 represent the number seven. They are bathed, their hair shaved off and thrown into the river, while the father says: "Mother Faro, your sons are born, here is their hair." (1) He then gives the cotton band,

1. Ba faro i wolo dew kunsi ye nin ye.

dyala, which was worn by the mother to the officiant who encircles the child's forehead with it while saying: "These two people are older than I am; let the nyama of the name which is to be given them leave with the dyala." (2) Then he gives them a special name. (3)

2. Nin ma fla ka koro u ma, u čua dali nyama ka ta fini disa few dyala fe.

[177] 3. Séni and Sinè for boys; Bintou and Wasa for girls. Among the Islamized Bambara this custom is also respected; the names given are always Alassan and Fouséni. This is most likely a distortion of the Arab names given to twins in Morocco.

845 The next day, carrying one of the children and accompanied
851 by a woman in charge of the other, the mother goes begging for millet or cotton in the village. She holds two identical spoon gourds in her hands. The gifts, equal in weight and quality, symbolize the twins; they are placed on the spoons. Then crossing her hands, the woman pours them into the basket in which she carries the gifts (4).

4. All the symbolism of gifts made to twins, like that of the double pot (see below), confirms observations made in the Sudan on the relationships between gifts and trade. On this subject, see M. Griaule, Dieu d'eau, pp. 234 ff. It is interesting to note here that

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[561] the society during a public consecration which she receives with several others, the group forming an age grade.

After an apprenticeship of seven days, the potters decide upon the date of the ceremony which is celebrated at the firing spot near the altars. Each member provides a hairpin (bandigi), which represents her on this occasion, and the skin of a hedgehog. Disrobed in front of the assembled villages, each girl is seated in turn on the altar as an aged woman examines her genitals to verify her virginity and the proper execution of the excision.

/126/ If the young girl is no longer a virgin, she is publicly de-
[831] clared dangadè (literally, bastard) and finds herself automatically excluded from the society; she will never be able to receive the potter's title. Otherwise, a proclamation is made immediately to the great joy of the public. If the excision has not been judged
[304] sufficient, the patient is given the title of potter after having submitted to a new operation performed in such a way that the blood runs over the pottery (1).

1. If excision is not possible, the operation takes the form of a wound inflicted with the hedgehog's skin (see p. 243).

575 An old woman then appears seated before members of the age grade
323 and instructs them. She tells of the origin and history of pottery,
867 apprising them of the difficulties of the craft such as fatigue, burns, etc. She teaches them patience towards the client and enumerates the rules which will have to be observed during their lifetime: to be pure in heart and to hate no one; not to undertake work shortly after having had sexual relations; to work in silence; to respect all taboos in general.

575 She then makes a libation of karite oil on the altar and rubs it on
323 the bodies of the initiates who must run their tongues over the pottery,
782 thus making an oath. Sheep, brought by the initiates' parents, are
431 then killed by having their throat cut over the hearth in the name of the potters while the elders of the society present to the initiates gifts consisting of several pots which they will sell for profit while waiting for their first work. This gift is moreover a sign of adoption.

323 The utensils are made with clay, mbogo pasa, taken from the
317 bottom of the watercourse or along the river's edge; they belong to
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304 784 561 which would be a dangerous one (1). The same rule applies to the

1. The approach of the virulent wanzo of the uncircumcised boy acts upon those of the boys undergoing the operations and afflicts them in the genital organs.

enclosure, consisting of several huts, where the newly circumcised boys remain under the surveillance of the sema. The enclosure is situated at a distance of several tens of meters from the village in order to isolate the age grade. For all that touches them, such as clothing, sticks, sistrums, dishes, and refuse, with the exception of the cap, is impregnated with their wanzo.

561 304 [431] The newly circumcised boys receive from their parents gifts of cowrie shells and food called wanzo sababu yala, "in honor of the wanzo," to speed their recovery.

[794] On the night which precedes the sixth day after the operation, a day called daworo, the children are initiated to the Komo (2).

2. See p. 203.

The following day, the sema leads them to the edge of the river, where they wash their wounds for the first time. This act, which brings about direct intervention of the element in which Faro lives, has moreover a social meaning: it consecrates the age grade and from this moment on, the children belong for the rest of their lives to the same flã, exchanging jokes and insults which are suitable between senãnku (3). It must be noted that this very simple act of communal

3. See p. 119.

ablution constitutes the inauguration of an age grade of circumcised boys and sets off from that moment all the rights and obligations its members will have toward each other.

A meal, eaten in common and accompanied by songs and dances, ends the ceremonies of the daworo. Hereafter the ablutions are repeated daily until the wounds are healed.

304 561 881 /187/ On the last day, all that has been in contact with the newly circumcised boys is gathered together at a crossroad near the enclosure.

*173 interview with his father, asked them to help him build a house where he could live independently. They set to work, and Mamari's house was soon built at Ségou-koro on the site of the future Biton-blon-da, the place where the ton' had been meeting up to that time. On Mondays and Thursdays, after a hunt to provide game, the members met there and had a feast. Each brought some sort of utensil and they prepared their own meals.

An old slave belonging to fa Siné, named bina (1) Bilali,

[576]

1. Bina, whose literal meaning is "uncle," is here used as a title of respect.

had been attracted by the fine food and asked to be taken in as a "slave of the ton' " (ton-dyon'). He was admitted on that basis and became a sort of general factotum. A Soninké slave followed his example and was likewise admitted and given the important role of trumpeter. Using a horn which he sounded three times, he called together the members of the ton' when ordered to do so by Mamari. He was called ton-masa, "master of the ton'," because his summons was not to be disobeyed on pain of [32] a fine of ten jugs of millet beer for recalcitrants.

A Somono slave named Allah-doungo (lit., Allah's pleasure) also offered his services to the ton', and the organization increasingly became the refuge of men seeking to evade any authority they deemed excessive.

These recruits were the first ton-dyon'; all were slaves in quest of freedom. Soon, however, the movement they had started was extended, thanks to the influence of the ton-tigi's diplomacy.

One day Mamari's mother gave (1) a free gift of twenty

[431]

1. It is entirely typical of native custom to give ostensibly free gifts in this way, when it is actually intended that the giver receive more than he gives. This is an example.

jugs of beer to the ton', and Mamari used the occasion to tell the

764 789 Burials are never willingly held on either Wednesday or Saturday (1) [Ed., see footnote above].

Finally, a small white chicken (2) to ward off bad luck

2. If the corpse is a woman, a fertilized egg is used.

is sometimes put into the niche just before it is closed off (1) [Ed., see footnote 1 above].

Upon returning from the burial, someone clubs the dead man's dog (1) [Ed., see footnote 1 above], unless he left express orders to the contrary. Some Bambara even go so far [554] as to buy a dog with this posthumous honor in mind. This seems to be another magic practice to exorcise the ghost of the deceased (1) [Ed., see footnote 1 above].

When they have returned to the house, the brothers-in-law of the deceased eat the national dish, millet mush (to). When they leave for their homes, each is given a rooster or a hen in the name of the deceased, which they must eat en route before they reach home. If the fowl [170] were not eaten until they reached their villages, it would arouse the dead man's vengeance; his ghost (nyama) would haunt these impious persons. This too seems to be another magic practice to counteract the evil effects of death.

764 431 (c) The funeral celebration. As soon as the death has been announced, it is the duty of every relative, neighbor, friend, or anyone under any sort of obligation to the deceased to bring an offering in proportion to his rank or degree of obligation for the purpose of honoring the dead (1).

1. We noted earlier the sanctions applied at the funerals of Biton and Ngolo.

In certain cases, the total of these offerings is very large. The chronicle of Ségou tells us that when Ngolo died the cowries contributed filled seven huts, representing several thousand francs. Besides, people give whatever they wish or can afford: a horse, a cow, a sheep, fowl, cowries, gold, strips of native cotton, fabrics, grain, etc.

583
[184]

family gives the bride's family a young girl to replace the one taken away.

until all or a portion of the agreed bride price has been paid and especially not before the customary gifts have been received.

The nature and value of the bride price and gifts vary since they depend on the wealth of the future husband, the rank of the woman and family customs. Among the poor, the bride price is small: a few handfuls of cowries, a chicken, a few
[435] kola nuts, a few lengths of native cotton. An average bride price is worth, in all, 25,000 to 30,000 cowries (about 25 to 30 francs). Among the rich, the bride price may include one or more slaves, gold jewelry, silver, fabrics, clothing, etc.

The same is true of the gifts; everything depends on the families involved. It is customary around Ségou, however, for the fiancé to give his bride a large piece of native material called kundugu fini, a dioké (a kind of blouse), and a pair of sandals with very thick soles. He must also, if he can afford to, give her a slave to do the kitchen work, a cow, jewelry, etc. [199]

He must also give presents to the girl's parents in accordance with his means.

The totality of the bride price and gifts is called furu-fen', literally, "the property of the marriage." As soon as part of this furu-fen' is handed over to the furu-bolo-ma-tigi, he takes it,
[273] escorted by some of the fiancé's friends, to the girl's fa. All of these proceedings, of course, involve jugs of native beer (dlo). The notables of the place, the dugu-tigi, the "elders," and even the kamalen', come at once to congratulate the family, to share in the drinking, and to receive a share of the furu-fen'.

The fiancée is often a little girl, and in that case the duties of the young man and his family go on for several years. The giving of gifts is repeated, to an extent commensurate with the young man's wealth and the standing of the girl's family.
● 431 At the time of harvest it is customary for the fiancé to send one
583 or more baskets of millet, each weighing 20 to 40 kilos, and from time to time, a jug of beer, 20 to 30 liters. On the

583 occasion of funerals or religious ceremonies, he brings offerings
●431 (fowl, kola nuts, millet, salt, etc.). The ceremony at which his contribution is indispensable is the da woro (1). On this

1. See p. 264 below.

occasion the furu-bolo-ma-tigi is entrusted with important gifts for the girl (clothing and jewelry) as well as for the relatives assembled (food of all kinds).

583 Just as the amount and nature of the furu-fen' vary, the manner of payment and the time set for the payment of the bride price are likewise left to the discretion of the parties. There may be a single payment or there may be installments, either before or partly before and partly after the bride is handed over. From the material point of view, the persons of the bride and groom are actually of no importance. The fa who gives the bride price wants a girl from the family with which he wishes an alliance, and all that matters is that the girl be marriageable at the date agreed upon, provided that she is handed over in accordance with the agreement. In the same connection, the person giving the bride price is not required to have the whole amount needed at the time of [200] the agreement; it is sufficient that he be in a position to pay when the amount falls due. This explains certain usages which might otherwise seem odd.

[584] It often happens that a fa arranging a marriage speaks for a very young girl or even for one not yet born. If the child is handed over before nubility, the marriage is not consummated until after the first menses. We have mentioned above that in such cases the marriage payment involves repeated gifts for years.

583 231 Another very curious method of paying the bride price is to follow a custom called "the mare's foot." Its essential features are as follows.

A person giving bride price has a mare that he could sell to pay off the obligation, but he prefers to promise one or more of the foals or, as the natives say, one or more of "feet." This method of turning a brood mare to account without selling it is common among the natives of western Sudan.

857 and his syere at the head. There, the n-Tomo-den' squat at
796 a little distance from the n-Tomo-tigi, who takes his place in
782 front of them, facing the tree where the guardian genie dwells, in order to perform the libations and sacrifices. First he takes a small gourd and pours the dege it contains against the trunk of the tree; he cuts the throat of a chicken and dribbles its blood on the tree in the same way; next, in a jet of saliva, he spits on it the juice and particles of kola nuts which he has chewed for the purpose; finally, he fastens a few of the chicken's feathers in the smear of blood. As he makes each of these offerings, he says to the genie: "Look here, I offer you this chicken, protect us, defend us against the wicked and against evil genii. Give us enough to live well. Save us from illness. Give us rain to make our fields fruitful and be propitious to our families."

He speaks thus for everybody, after which each one comes in turn to offer his sacrifice and to make personal requests through him as intermediary.

857 The admission of new members follows. Each of them
796 pays his entrance fee and then, prostrate before the genie, swears never to reveal anything to the uninitiated, [239] above all to the women." If you betray your brothers," says the n-Tomo-tigi, "may the genie kill you!" The new member repeats: "May he kill me!"

[535] At this point the victims are cooked, and while they are being prepared, the n-Tomo-den' dance in turn, dressed in the ceremonial regalia. Their steps are accompanied by the beating of drums, and they twirl a flexible stick as they dance. When the victims are cooked, the banquet begins. Everyone eats and drinks as much as he can; a special treat of kola nuts brings the banquet to a close.

857 On this day each n-Tomo-den' is expected to take one of
796 his gifts or some other personal possession and make a present of
572 it to his n-golo-moso (1). This is how one names the young

[431]

1. N-golo-moso, literally, "woman of the birth," is the companion associated with the rite which he is to undergo.

561 and religious life). The young men of the same soli form what is called a flambolo. Three consecutive classes of flambolo form a flanton. The women have a parallel organization. Each fulani is a ton-den (child of the ton), with a corresponding association.

561 241 476 The association's role, apart from the seasonal celebrations and the copious feasts, accompanied by a great deal of drinking, is that of a mutual aid society and of a veritable village work cooperative. It is organized, administered, and articulated with a view to the agricultural work. The chief, kariku, expedites current business, with the assistance of a syere (witness, deputy). He has a treasurer who receives offerings and makes payments, the femmaraba (he who preserves things), plus an honorary president and an adviser, chosen from among the notables and delegated by them; he must supervise the society and orient its activities.

This social organism rests, in the last analysis, on the exchanges of services initiated and supported by the kariku. He sees to it that help is forthcoming to a man making the customary work payments in the fields of his parents-in-law or future parents-in-law (in exchange for food and drink furnished by the parents-in-law to these ton-den). In like manner, a farmer asks the kariku for help in clearing a field of brush. This request is made through an intermediary or a sénanku who [58] accompanies the request with ten kola nuts. The chief accepts the present and calls his council into session to study the affair technically and to fix the salary. The same procedure is followed for the winter weeding, which calls for rapid completion, as well as for building dams, irrigating canals, paths, roads suitable for carting, etc.

431 824

An analogous system exists for the female kari, for sowing the crops as well as for gathering the harvest, mutual domestic aid, etc. The two groups collaborate for the seasonal celebrations.

643 d. The Fama. -- We see that the canton is a grouping formed under the authority and influence of a dominant family. Its unity is determined by political, social, and religious laws which regulate it. The fa or head of the dominant family becomes the Fama, that is,the patriarch, chief of the canton. He then often renounces the administration of the faya, which he turns over to his second (syere),

567 701 3. The ton-koro-bolo behind the disi is a special reserve formed entirely of pure ton-dyon.

4. The keli-tigi was the chief of the expedition, designated by the Fama. He might be a dyon-kuntigi (chief of the furuba-dyon), a member of the Fama's community, or the Fama himself.

708 534 Finally, the army was accompanied by a musical corps, composed essentially of drums which transmitted messages. There were armpit drums (dunkan'), shoulder drums (taura), three-legged drums (dange), drums carried by two men (tabala), and coupled drums (denuba). Often horns (buru) were added, sometimes small horns made of ivory or horn, and sometimes xylophones (bada) and cowbells.

708 537 A dyeli (griot) follows the expedition to observe the exploits that he must retransmit; he must encourage the warriors and dispel panic by the power of his oratory.

B. Influence of Social Organization on Economic Life

a. The ton, Work Community

621 We have seen that the social unit among the Bambara is the community. The community is also the work unit and the economic unit. The independent individual is not conceived of. The community owns all the wealth which makes up the spiritual and material patrimony: the land, the agricultural, industrial, and commercial products, the habitations ...

423 621 622 609 [431] The community regulates the exploitation of the land. The dugu-tigi is the first occupant, master of the land, of which he distributes the lots to the different family heads. When a stranger, a family head, wants to enter into a community, he chooses an unoccupied field and asks the village chief for it. The request is accompanied by ten kola nuts and a chicken. Authorization cannot then be refused. The chief of the land sacrifices the chicken before the entire community and informs it of the installation of the newcomer. When the stranger wants to leave the land, he is given back his chicken and kola nuts.

423 621 622 Land assigned to a family head may always be taken back from him without justification by the dugu-tigi and his council.

D. Position of Women

562 Women's society has remained much more impenetrable to European civilization. Women very rarely go to French schools, and unlike the men, who, during their military service and otherwise, are partly immersed in our system of civilization, they have few contacts with the Whites and appear to be even more attached to custom than their husbands. Very few speak French, and for all these [191] reasons their society has remained closed and very imperfectly known to the Whites.

562 Reasoning from what is known of their juridicial situation, we 858 have deduced their inferior position. Perhaps a better knowledge of their role and of their importance in the society will lead us to very different conclusions. From the legal point of view, a woman is always a minor; she belongs first to her own community, to which she owes obedience, then to her husband's community. When the marriage is legal, that is to say, when the husband has paid the matrimonial settlement, the children belong to the husband; if not, in the case of concubinage, the woman's family can claim the child, because it belongs to the family, as does everything of the mother's.

562 Her marriage is decided on by the fa; although in practice the woman is often consulted indirectly beforehand, and she has a 582 certain liberty in her choice. Even a slave can refuse to marry her 583 master, despite gifts and promises. But a woman is forbidden to marry someone she considers a relative, that is, someone who belongs to her paternal line and who bears the same name she does. Exogamy is the rule.

562 Yet, when a woman marries, she keeps her paternal name and her personal taboos; sometimes she adds her name to that of her son, 593 who normally bears the dyamu of his father. The woman remains very attached [75] to her family and goes to stay with them often. Among them she will find support in case of a difference of opinion [586] with her husband. In case of divorce through the fault of the husband, he loses all rights over the wife as well as the settlement he had paid.

595 In the system of polygamy, the first wife is mistress of the house; the other wives gather at her place for meals. She distributes [431] the husband's presents, but aside from these privileges, the rights of the wives are equal as are those of their children.

852 with water added (to recall the victory of Faro over Mousso Koroni). The patriarch shakes the family pembélé three or four times over the infant's head to give him the nyama of the recently deceased whose ni and dya he has inherited. Then he places the altar (kere la boli ni) on the infant's chest three times, after having recited a prayer. He cuts the throat of a red cock, dips his index finger in the blood, and traces three or four crosses on the newborn's forehead, who be-
553 comes boli din. The name is given the eighth day by the Komo chief
[431] under the doubalé, where the old people assemble. The father offers 100 kola nuts, two jars of millet beer, plus a ram whose throat is cut, and money for the griot. Part of the baby's hair is shaved off and kept in [90] a case (sebe); another part of the hair is thrown in the river as a sacrifice to Faro. The eldest of the old men examines the roots of the infant's hair and the conjunction of the eyebrows, thus determining its character (téré). Then he swings the baby seven times in an east-west direction and eight times north-south, giving him the first name of the deceased ancestor and, at the same time, his spiritual principles. The griot recite the father's mottoes, the sénanku come to joke with the baby, and the blacksmith traces the scarifications.

845 Twins. We have seen the belief that in the beginning twins were always born, and Faro subsequently punished man by abolishing double births which he no longer accords except to certain privileged persons. For the Bambara, twins are new beings who inherit neither the ni nor the dya of any ancestor. Special rites are observed at their
[201] birth which is announced by showing the raised right and left index fingers, without saying anything, for the proclamation would be so powerful that it would be harmful to the newborn twins (see G. Dieterlen, Essai sur la religion bambara [Essay on Bambara Religion].
553 The rite of name-giving is carried out on the bank of the river. The following day, accompanied by another woman, the mother goes in search of millet and cotton which she gathers in identical calabash ladles. Equal gifts are put in the ladles, which the mother presents
[301] in crossed hands. Later, the twins are fitted with metal bracelets representing their dya, and, in certain regions, with a pendant in the form of double slave irons. The twins always stay together; they
856 wear identical clothes. If one dies in early infancy, the mother places on the mat beside the surviving infant a small doll made by

physical male factor residing in the clitoris. The operation takes place, moreover, during the same period as the circumcision. It is carried out by the potteress, wife of the blacksmith, in full daylight before the assembled kin. During their seclusion the girls wear a white veil which plays the same role as the bonnet of the circumcised. Instead of the sistrum, the girls shake a gourd which contains eight millet seeds and cotton fibers which their fiancés have given them. A goat is sacrificed for the ceremony. The collected blood is given to the fiancé in honor of his ancestors who become those of the girl.

[93] On the last day of the ceremony the girls definitively rid themselves of their wanzo by jumping over a pyre composed of the clothes and scraps of the excised.

e. Marriage

It is only after having been circumcised or excised that young people may marry. The institution of marriage is regulated by a ritual which has often been described, particularly by Amar, Monteil, Tauxier, Aubert . . .

The marriage arrangements are made by the respective fa of the two betrothed, after the young people have been consulted. The request is officially made to the parents by an intermediary, a man of caste or a sénanku. It is accompanied by ritual gifts offered to the fa of the girl. In the Bougouni region the request is accompanied by ten kola nuts, because ten is a complete number that designates good events and future births. (Nine kola nuts are offered to present condolences, four as a sign of greeting. To send three nuts would be insulting, and 19 nuts, marking incompleteness, would be a sign of lack of confidence.) The first kola nuts to be offered are always wrapped in one or two karité leaves, symbol of life and of fecundity. If the ten kola nuts are accepted, it means that the father has opened the way to the marriage. The intermediary then make a second trip the following week, bringing a cock for sacrifice to the ancestors and ten more kola nuts; during a third trip he offers another cock and ten more kola nuts before the entire assembled family of the young girl, witnessing that the girl may meet her fiancé. In the course of the fourth trip, the intermediary leads the girl to the fiancé's family, where she will be confided to the wife of the head of the family who will undertake her education.

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778 peculiarity of this fetish that it continues to live in its hourglass as
778 long as a particle of this object remains.

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Young Bambara holding the sinsin, the fetish of twins

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778 This fetish protects the mother of the twins, and unites the latter
431 in such close affection that one never receives a gift without sharing it with the other. I would even go so far as to say that it is in good taste never to offer anything to one without offering as much to the other, and when they are given something, the first to be favored is the last born, who is considered by everyone as the older.

845 778 431 If one of the twins dies early in life, as usually happens, the survivor receives a statuette which he keeps all his life with jealous care and to which he gives the name of the deceased. He dresses it to the best of his ability, often covers it with glass trinkets, such as bangles, beads, bits of amber, rings, etc., and well-bred people never give him a gift without adding at least 5 cowrie shells for the statuette.

845 778 825 The sinsin also grants twins a curious privilege. A scorpion not only cannot bite them, it is even at their service, and on their order will bite a fellow who has displeased them.

845 778

A twins' doll.

845 551 It is easy to recognize twins (flani in Bambara) as they have special names, the commonest being Sinna, Maféné, Gno, and Ouassa. /99/

10. The Genie Protector of Villages

776 621 The genie protector of a village lives on a knoll or a rock; almost always, if not invariably, its home is a baobab or false cedar near the walls, in a little grove intersected by neat paths, well kept and often raked.

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1. The sinsin, the gnéna of twins, is an exception, as it may also be bought.

inheritance, and rarely by purchase. The gnâ pass from father to son by inheritance, but it is always possible to obtain one by purchase; all that is necessary is to find in the village the number of people needed to make up the staff of the idol, provided one is not opposed by the sorcerer's veto.

Every purchase of a powerful boli occasions celebrations, festivals, and drinking bouts that last from three to eight days. These festivals are like marriage celebrations. Surrounded by his staff, the new fetish owner spends the day offering d'lo, or millet beer, to the many friends who come to congratulate him and give him their gifts. It is not until evening that he leaves his b'lon, or entry hut, and, followed by initiates carrying the idol, goes to the sacred grove or under the trees chosen to be the meeting place henceforth. The night is spent in dancing and shouting hymns.

In the eyes of the Negro to buy a gnâ is to become united with it in a firm and indissoluble way. It is equivalent to marrying the fetish, and they have no other phrase to express their idea, their notion of the matter: "A yé boli fourou, he got married"; "ayé boli fourou gosi, he has stamped and sealed his marriage with the boli" (2); "ne ka fourouboloma faro (3) flé, here is my wedding present";

[583]

2. Fourou gosi: In order to enjoy the marriage lawfully, whoever marries must, in the presence of the head of the village, pay his wife's parents a handful of kola nuts -- usually eleven, one more than the required ten.

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3. Fourouboloma fara: This is the name of the small present of cowrie shells given to a

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/newly married/ couple by their friends. It varies from 40 cowrie shells to 2 kémés, or 160 cowrie shells.

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425 "a taboli konio kera, the marriage of his boli has taken place."

1935 The value of a gnâ varies between 30 and 40 francs, and whoever owns one can from then on make them. If one counts the presents given to the maker and to his staff, the dogs, goats, and kola nuts offered in sacrifice on the day of his reception, and finally the beer of the wedding, its value is undoubtedly more than 100 francs.

5. Differences among the Powerful Boli

778 I class all the powerful boli into three main groups. In the first I place those which formerly were the prerogative of kings, princes, and ministers; in the second, those which have neither temple nor sacred grove; and in the third, those which have a temple and a sacred grove, or at least one or the other.

Those of the first group are not at all numerous, and the most popular are the Safolo, the Kongoba, the Nan-Woloko, and the Kouantara. They are usually found in villages which were formerly capitals of cantons or provinces and are in the hands of people whose families have included a kafotigi (head of a canton) or a fama (king or petty king), i.e., a head of a province, a minister of the king on whom the title of ruler (fama) was bestowed.

Everything leads me to think that in the beginning these were merely fetishes responsible for watching over the king and the people of his court, analogous to what above I have called the family boli. At present they have become boli of sects. But although all circumcised men can enter the ranks of those who pay them respect, only married men become initiated, and the orgies in their honor are private orgies whose entire cost is borne by graybeards.

778 According to legend, slaves were sacrificed to these boli in the
782 time of the Bambara kings. Since then the worshippers have been content to offer them millet beer, hens, and goats in addition to the

[846] The navel dries between the sixth and eighth day. The head-
852 man and elders are told of the event, and all the heads of families
553 (the gouatigou) come and sit in order of age and rank at the entrance door of the hut which opens into the court of the confined woman. The religious head, the gnéna-sonnaba (2), goes alone into the hut

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2. Usually it is the religious head, priest of the dasiri, who shaves the child, but there are exceptions to this rule. In some villages it is the civil head who performs the tonsure; in others this task is the prerogative of a family. Sometimes the shaving is done by the father or the grandfather. The families in which this custom is followed are not pure Bambara but are mixed with Marka blood.

and /170/ shaves the head of the infant on its mother's knees. Long
[201 lines of women push into the inner court, clap their hands, let out
●431] shrill cries of "kouyo kouyo" as signs of joy, and give their friend a small present of millet and cotton (1).

1. The women give a handful of cotton and about a pound of millet.

When the head of the child has been shaved and well cleaned, the headman lays his hands on him to drive away evil spirits that might wish to harm his life; he gently strokes his back and chest and, spitting lightly, recites a short formula which he alone knows and can understand. Then he goes and sits among his people, and the father presents him with eleven kola nuts on a platter of braided grass. The heads of families, in order of age, place their offering of 40 to 80 cowrie shells (2) on this same platter, and the gnéna-sonnaba asks

2. The men give 40 cowrie shells. The generous ones go as high as 80.

796 The youths follow, dressed in blouses knotted at the abdomen
88| like towels and trousers into which three pairs of legs and three abdomens could fit without any trouble, dragging drums and bass drums. To keep up the march and cause it to be forgotten (they often come from far away) they shout a loud "you you" and make coarse jokes, which are here addressed to the fair sex more than elsewhere. Sometimes also, between two laughs, two great silly laughs, something like the crack of a whip is heard. This sound is made by five stubby fingers as they are applied to the cheeks of dear little angels, warming them. In fact, a band of little boys and girls trot among the youths in their birthday suits, passing to the right and to the left and winding between their legs, and patience wears out and quickly comes to an end.

After the young people come the old men; they are bent double, leaning on spears, and even while talking of future projects they recall the days of the past. It is quite apparent that there are no more like them, their equal cannot be found. Into the foroko, the goatskins they slip over their arms and fasten on their shoulders, they have slipped some good handfuls of cowrie shells for the mothers of the circumcised
[276 and excised, a box of the snuff that every self-respecting stranger
43|] gives as a gift to the men of the village, and finally the kola nuts that the sacrificer will chew before spitting the remains onto the front side of the god and some that, as educated, well-bred men, they keep for close friends. They also carry the hens or roosters for the sacrifice; these are attached by the feet to the straps of the foroko and hung head down their wings flapping horribly.

88| The human flood arrives at the gates of the village; stops a
796 moment under the big trees, and tidies itself. The pointed caps /184/
301 are put a little to one side of the head, the blouses are unfolded, and nakedness is concealed. On the women's side there is indescribable hubbub, like the sound of the distant ocean at rising tide; they polish and adorn themselves and beautify themselves. On their feet they put little chains, on their arms heavy bracelets that knock together with the sound of old iron, and on their hips the young girls at least hang belts of beads sprinkled with little bells that tinkle at the slightest movement. In their noses they put crescents of gold or copper, in

each ear ten to twelve rings of soft iron, tin, or silver, and those that they put on their fingers and toes number more than twenty.

On the braids of their hair, all running with grease, they hang bits of amber and rings of polished pottery as white as snow, and around all their necks are bead necklaces from which dangle bits of amber, grigris, and here and there, held by leather strips, pottery rings that fall back between the shoulders and in front on their bosoms. They also bind their foreheads with narrow crowns of rainbow-colored beads or diadems of coral. Such are the Negro girls in their most beautiful array.

At the homes of the circumcised and excised, the huts and courts are crowded with people, for in addition to friends and story-tellers /griots/ -- the poor troubadours of the country -- there may be in each home older married daughters who have come with their husbands, children, and parents-in-law, and the fiancé's delegation to his betrothed seem to be in every corner. This is really the festival of the tribe, and everybody is present; only the fiancés are excluded and cannot appear on this day. And how very Bambara it is! In one spot people quench their thirst with great drinks of d'lo, or millet beer, while nearby, squatted around steaming gourds, others stuff themselves with to, or gruel. The hands held out to you are running with sauce; the children who surround you are covered with leftovers from the feast and brandish under your nose bones that they gnaw clean with their bare teeth, and while they call to you Sogo ("some meat"), the satiated people next to you exclaim: "Abarka, thank you Né fara san, I am full for the moment." And everywhere there is an infernal bedlam! Old women beat furiously on inverted pumpkins in conari full of water /185/; youths beat drums, women and young girls clap their hands in rhythm, and everybody shouts the glories of the family. The families of the circumcised and excised are beside themselves, so great is their joy, and if you are one of their close friends you will be shown all the gifts received, in plain sight in the court. You are made to taste of everything, to touch and feel everything, and, just as on the day when the child is given its name, you receive, on leaving, the kola nut of life (le ni woro).

881 sentence, for the headman only talks in a low voice, as is in good taste. /197/ The speech is short; he calls by name each circumcised boy and excised girl and reminds everybody that among them circumcision is as old as the world, that is to say, as old as the Bambara people. "Yes," he exclaims, "our circumcised children are on the path of their fathers; they are Bambara. Youths, young girls, men and women, old men and old women, our circumcised ones can henceforth take part in palavers, sit with their elder brothers around the gourds of d'lo, or sorghum /sic/ beer, and take part in our games, our merry-making, and our rites. May everyone know it and no one forget, or ever treat them as if they were uncircumcised (1) -- that is the

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1. To call someone blakoro ("uncircumcised") is the insult of insults.

deepest insult! Everyone will know how to avenge an insult to his child, and I will know how to avenge an insult to mine." He ends by saying: "Truce to disputes; let us eat, drink, dance, and enjoy ourselves, and /leave/ serious matters (2) /until/ after the festival."

2. All disputes, all litigation, everything that disunites.

From then on, d'lo flows in streams and throats are cleansed. Everybody, young and old, men and women, dances in honor of the young "citizens," and as long as the sparkling, foaming liquor lasts, there are songs, dances, cries and shouts without end on the public square, day and night. And when the beer reaches its end, each circumcised boy and excised girl, in order of age, stretches his or her muscles before the public, accompanied by father, mother, and all his family and that of his fiancée or her finacé. This is the climax of the festival. At this point the cries and shouts redouble, 881 and the drinkers, jug in hand, foam on their lips, gazing into space 43 and wavering on their legs, place beads, cowrie shells, and a kola nut in the large pockets of the blouses of the circumcised youths and

881 onto the platters of the excised girls. With the last kola nut all leaping stops, and the festival ends. Slowly the crowd withdraws and goes home, for it has only too much need of a little rest.

881 On the days following this "coming out of the circumcised" (the name given to this occasion by the Bambara), the youths and 574 maids run around the country dressed up, and go to thank those who were at the da woro, or festival of the sixth day. Boys and girls, in two groups, under the /198/ direction of their old woman guardian, walk along the paths one after another, Indian file. At the head of the column is the massa, or queen; the massa ma Kono, her deputy, comes next, and she is followed by the massa ma Kono ségére, who again is the deputy of the one in front of her. All the others are girls that are healed, and the last, the youngest of all, is called koulé. The boys march in the same order and bear the same titles. This way of thanking people is very Bambara; although they insist on showing themselves so that people will know that they are circumcised, [193] they want especially that alms be given them, and they go to ask a gift and hold out both hands. The Bambara people are a beggar people!

Chapter 10

Bambara Marriage

584 Little Bambara girls are betrothed when they are very young, generally between the ages of four to ten, and girls of twelve, fourteen, and sixteen years who still await a suitor are very unusual. Yet age matters little, for there are three stages in marriage: the proposal, the betrothal, and the wedding, and whoever wants to take a wife, whether he is young, mature, or an old man, married, widower, or unmarried, must obey this law.

583 the fiancée has time to reflect and to open her heart to love, for her
584 wedding will not take place until one, two, or often three years after excision; once this has been performed she will be qualified to be a mother.

584 From the time of the engagement the two families draw together,
594 establish friendly relations, and visit each other. After the girl has grown up, during the year or two that elapse between the excision and the wedding, she spends two weeks to a month each year with her parents-in-law. One might say that in Bani country, this is the general custom (2). When the young men sent to bring her arrives,

2. In the environs of Ségou this custom is less comon. Often the two families come to an agreement, and on the appointed day the fiancée goes to the home of her fiancé, accompanied by a young man appointed by the council of elders. After the last festival of the circumcision (baloko déou don bo, "the coming out of the circumcised"), some, even many villages hold a festival for the fiancée. She goes to the home of her fiancé all loaded with beads and necklaces and escorted by all the young girls of the village. The fiancé bears all the cost of this festival, called mousodjira, "to show the wife." All the youths of the village and of neighboring villages give 80 to 160 cowrie shells to help the fiancé cover the expenses.

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she /205/ hides in the hut of friends, and the little band runs right and left looking for her. They soon find her, members of her family--

584 her mother, step-mothers, and sisters -- join them, and the little
574 procession goes to the religious head, the gnéna-sonnaba, priest of the dasiri, genie protector of the village, who gives some advice to the child and sets the day of her return. On leaving the village, the girl stops and refuses to go on; the youths take hold of her and carry her in their arms, and she abandons herself to cries and shouts that must not cease before she reaches the edge of the fields that surround the village.

584 Although the bride price is set, it is more difficult to determine
431 the value of the fiancé's presents of millet, hens, salt, kola, and d'lo, or millet beer. The size of these presents, given gratuitously over four, five, or six years and often more, depends largely on the fortune of each man and the prestige of the fiancée's family. At harvest time he supplies one or two baskets of millet /each/ weighing 20 to 40 kilograms; at the great annual sacrifice offered to the family boli he provides a hen, salt, kola nuts, and dégé, or millet flour mixed with honey water. From time to time he gives his prospective father-in-law some well-filled jugs of d'lo containing at least 20 to 30 liters /each/, and if there is a festival at his home, he is careful not to forget the latter. He shows his generosity at the festival on the occasion of his fiancée's excision (1); at the da woro, or festival of

1. A Bambara man is not present at the festival which takes place at the excision of his fiancée.

the sixth day, he shows himself to be generous, and the guardian of the wedding gifts takes her the required present, a loincloth in black stripes on a yellow background, four to five pounds /the French livre equals one half a kilogram, a little more than a pound avoirdupois/ of butter, two to three kilograms of salt, 20 to 30 liters of d'lo, or millet beer, an equal amount of dégé, or flour mixed with honey water, and finally some decorative ornaments -- a bead necklace, a piece of amber, a bracelet. These last gifts are in no way required; they are given purely out of amiable courtesy.

584 One little fact without importance, remains to be noted. From
606 the time of the engagement, the fiancée may not eat in the presence

585 their respects. It is chiefly the d'lo, or millet beer, that attracts them, but under these circumstances the Bambara forget that they are beggars always holding out their hands. Although the visitors eat, drink, and get drunk, they pay for at least a part of what they consume.

585 Through the intermediary of the fourouboloma tigi, each guest
431 and visitor, man or woman, gives the couple a fourouboloma fara, or wedding present, in kind or in money. They know, after all, that this is a means -- and the best-- by which they can empty a jug of d'lo, then a second, and finally several.

585 I know nothing more taxing than a Bambara wedding, which lasts two, three days, and often eight, if the husband is rich or wants to appear so. As long as the festivities last, the bride and groom are in their respective huts, surrounded by people who are sweating from having eaten or drunk too much, in an atmosphere warmed by foul breaths, and where there is never any fresh air. They do not have a minute, not an instant, of peace, and they cannot even attend to
[514] the wants of nature without being escorted by a numerous band. After each meal there is in their courts a deafening noise of drums, horns, and songs shouted by voices never in harmony, and their ears hear nothing but these sentences, which must be a torture to them in the long run: "May your marriage be happy, may hands and feet spring from it (may you have many children), may God preserve your /212/ health, may He grant you a long and vigorous old age. Thank you, thank you, you have received us well, you have not been sparing of the d'lo, I am full (nzé dé fara -- or again -- né fara dérén) (1)."

1. On the day of her wedding, a young woman talks only with the many women who have come to keep her company and with her maids of honor. When the time has come when she can talk, she is offered a hen.

764 has been filled and his soul goes to Lahara. In the eyes of the Negroes,
782 this act has none of the attributes of a sacrifice; it is the price of the right to enter Lahara and is given by the children to /222/ their father's soul. Moreover, they give it to him alive, and it is slipped into the grave at the moment when the last small board, the last wood chip, or the last earthen slab making up the root is set in place (1).

1. A nest egg is slipped in instead of a hen if the deceased was a woman.

764 At the end of the ceremony the deceased's dog is killed (2),

[23] 2. If the deceased owned a dog it is always killed unless the old man decided otherwise while he was alive. There are Bambara, especially women, who raise dogs in order to have this honor, and for this reason only.

and the sons-in-law and the brothers-in-law eat to, or millet gruel.
[43] When they depart they also receive a rooster or a hen. It is given them in the name of the deceased, and since it is the gift of a dead person, they kill and eat it on the way (3). The fetishes and the genii

[782] 3. This practice, again, is no sacrifice in the eyes of the Negro.

would be displeased if such a gift should arrive in the village alive, and whoever became guilty of such a crime would become the plaything of most of the gnâma and could dig his grave.

The Bambara do not place any kind of food either on or in the grave. But for three days in the evening, at nightfall, a dish of tô (gruel) and a little fresh water is placed on the gouâ so that the soul of the old man may satisfy his hunger and quench his thirst.

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gnâma-n-kou or the na-yanka (I do not know the name of this plant), put to boil and soak in water. To make it effective, at least two kola nuts are offered to the fetish and five hens are sacrificed to it.

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of the staff, which lives off the altar. For the mere act of having killed a dog or a goat, of which they receive a good share of the meat, they get a fee consisting of a basket of sorghum (18 to 20 kilograms) and 1, 600 cowrie shells (about 2 francs).

Since initiates of the fetish are the only ones who can touch the corpse and lay it in its final home, they receive 8, 000 to 10, 000 cowrie shells (about 8 to 10 francs) on that score. At the end of the sangafo (3) the god's retinue go and sweep the hut of the deceased,

3. "Sangafo, to go and offer condolences to the relatives of a deceased."

purify it with holy water, and drive out the last gnâma of the murdering Komo, and for this five fine hens are slaughtered. As payment for their trouble, the family also gives them five to six meters of cloth and 8 to 10 ba (4) (about 8 to 10 francs); 50 francs do not cover

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4. A ba is worth 800 cowrie shells or about 1 franc. (The Bambara count by 40 and 80, and not by 50 and 100. 40, débé; 80, kémé.)

the cost.

[43] Fortunately, the family does not bear all the expenses. Friends help a little, and everyone brings his offering: from one person they get a /228/ hen, from another a débé (40 cowrie shells) or a kémé (80 cowrie shells). Nevertheless, they bear most of the cost, and [42] the fetishes are one of the chief reasons for that bonding of children (1)